

CORNELIUS, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND FAVOR OF THE
APOSTOLIC SEE, ARCHBISHOP OF HALIFAX.

*To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Halifax, health and
benediction in the Lord:*

DEARLY BELOVED:

In the course of our last Lenten Pastoral we pointed out some of the many evils that afflict society, and that arise from a want of reflection on God, who can be known through his visible works. From this forgetfulness of God,—from this banishing of him from their daily life and not recognizing the limitations he has set to their self-indulgence, many live as though they had no aspirations above those of the brute creation, and no higher aim than the gratification of their passions. They ignore the teachings of the Gospel; they deny the most evident principles of morality; and they proclaim unrestrained freedom of sensual indulgence. Too superficial for reason; too proud for authority; too vicious for purity of sentiment, the spirit of our age has all the impiety of Ancient Greece or Rome, without their cultured refinement. Education, which is a blessing when used aright, has been employed as a means of corrupting the hearts of millions, and of carrying moral poison into the sanctity of the home. Family prayer is neglected; the innocent pleasures that are found around a well regulated hearth are despised; and only the half idiotic, half vicious pastimes of a frivolous world are prized. The family is the root and source of social and civil society: if it be not kept pure the State must speedily become like a tree affected with dry rot, fair, perhaps, to outward seeming, but ready to fall in the first storm.

The sanctity of the marriage tie, from which the family itself has its origin, is a matter of the first importance in the civil, as well as in the religious order. The history of nations teaches us with all the hard logic of facts, that when a people make

light of the marriage bond they are within a measurable distance of national decay. It cannot be otherwise ; if the source be poisoned the whole stream will be polluted. If family life be broken up, and marriage be degraded into a temporary union, to be dissolved at the bidding of any unholy motive, civil society, whose units are families, can have no stability, and no civic virtue.

Now, it is a sad fact, happily not verified in our midst, that divorce is on the increase in many places. Trashy publications, sold as "Literature," are helping to propagate the idea that what they falsely call "love" is to be blindly followed ; that one cannot resist its influence ; and that it makes wrong right. They speak of a man or a woman, meeting his or her "destiny ;" by this they mean that the man or woman in question, no matter by what sacred ties they may be already bound, may meet one of the opposite sex, towards whom they are irresistibly drawn, and for whose sake they may lawfully break their sacred bonds. This is the substance of the teaching diffused over pages on pages of thousands of novels. Pure love is an ennobling sentiment ; but the brutal instincts of humanity are, in those books, made to wear the mask of love, and are exalted as objects of veneration and sympathy. With such principles as these instilled into the mind from earliest youth, and with religion banished from the school room, what wonder that a generation should grow up with a moral sense diseased, and with little, or no belief in the sanctity of Christian Marriage, and no care for the welfare and purity of a home.

To you, dearly beloved, who believe with our Holy Church that which Christ so plainly teaches, viz. : That marriage is of God, instituted from the beginning as the union of one man with one woman, joined by God, who left no power to man or state to put them asunder—(Math. XIX-6.), we need say nothing about the awful guilt of another union, though sanctioned by the law of any State whatsoever. You know that death alone can break the bond of marriage, and leave the survivor free to contract another. Husband and wife, in regard to the obligations of marriage, are by Christ's law, expounded by St. Paul, on precisely the same footing.—I. Cor. VII-4.) What is unlawful for the wife is unlawful for the husband. "A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth,"—(Ibid. 39), so,

also, is the husband bound as long as the wife liveth. But whilst you know and believe all this, there is danger that owing to the false maxims of the world, and to the pernicious principles set forth in books and newspapers, some may be led astray and forget the sanctity of marriage, or assume its responsibilities without thought of its sacred obligations. Hence some words of warning and of advice on this point are deemed necessary.

Marriage being by divine institution a life long union, by which two become, as it were, but one flesh, dividing the cares of life, and sharing its joys; constituting thus domestic Society, the source alike of the family and the State; is noble in its origin, holy by its Sacramental character, and full of grave responsibility. It is momentous in its consequences both to the individuals who contract it, to their offspring, and to civil Society of which they form a part. A well assorted union is fraught with blessings to all these; whilst an ill-advised, or unhappy marriage is disastrous to all of them. When children are born of a marriage, the consequences of that union, whether for good, or evil, do not die with the parents; they will live on, and be propagated, perhaps to the end of time, by their descendants. If these truths were taken to heart, and exercised that influence which they ought on the conduct of Christians, many of the evils which we are now called on to deplore would cease to exist.

If we would know what husband and wife should be to one another, let us learn from God himself. When this earth had become fit for the habitation of the human race, Adam the first man, was created. Then God said: "Let us make him a help like unto himself." (Gen. ii. 18.) A helpmeet, an assistant, a partner,—that is what husband should be to wife, and wife to husband. A help in the toils of life, and on the road to heaven; each trying to lighten the load of the other, to encourage and to raise up the soul of the other to God. This is the noble idea of the marriage relation that God teaches us. But alas! how often do we see this holy union degraded by unfaithfulness, and instead of being a partnership of loving mutual assistance, turned into a yoke, which each endeavours to make more unendurable for the other. Those who ought to be a mutual help on the way to heaven, become too often a snare, and a stumbling block to each other's salvation, by reason of unchecked

anger, profanity of conduct, drunkenness, or cruel neglect. And the children that have been given as a sacred charge to these parents, and for whose souls they will have to give an account, instead of being trained to virtue, and bound to home by those innocent pleasures which parents should seek to provide, are often scandalized in their tender years by the bad example of their parents, and are spiritually murdered by those who should rather die than give them occasion of sin. Let those who are already joined in wedlock reflect seriously on these truths; let them examine their past and see if they have been a true help, in earthly and in spiritual things, to their partners; let them consider how they have acted at home, and whether they have sought to make it as cheerful and as Christian as they could; and whether they are properly discharging the lawful duties of parents, viz.: that of training souls for God.

To those who have not yet entered into the state of matrimony, words of advice and of warning are necessary. Do not be misled by the false principles regarding marriage, and its duties, of which we have already spoken. Learn from the infallible voice of Holy Church what you should believe, and how you should act, in choosing a lifelong partner and helpmeet. Neither money, nor position, nor personal appearance, if separated from virtuous principles, can ensure a happy marriage. The wild romancing of novelists is not verified in every day life. Unless love be founded on reason it cannot endure. That deceptive sentiment which arises on account of some external quality in the person admired is not love; it is an unreasoning passion, born of a more, or less, refined sensual instinct, and is as fleeting as the cause which gave it birth. How many vain tears and useless regrets, and years of slow agony, follow from marriages contracted under the spell of this delusive passion, falsely called love. We are endowed with a free will, and no one person is necessarily obliged to give the affections of the heart to another. It is the pernicious folly of maudlin fools, and the debasing argument of those who seek to make sensuality respectable, to pretend that one has no control over one's affections, but must follow whithersoever passion leads. True love is a deliberate act of the will, decided upon by reasons which appear to the intelligence to prove the existence of certain lovable qualities in the object admired. If

the intelligence be Christian, then the only qualities that can win true love must bear the impress of a Christian spirit.

In choosing, then, a helpmeet, one should look at the conduct, principles of action and religious sentiments of such person. Do not be guided by outward appearances; these are deceitful: value only the qualities of mind and heart that spring from, and are nourished by a living Faith. Without these there can be no lasting respect; without respect there can be no love; and without love no matrimonial happiness.

And we would warn, with all the solemnity that the wish of Holy Church can give to our words, our dear children against mixed marriages. We wish to speak no uncharitable word of our brethren without the fold. We know and appreciate their many civic and humane virtues, and desire to ever live with them on the most friendly terms. But it is our duty to point out that such marriages can rarely be aught but disastrous in their consequences. If the parties are both firm in their religious convictions, then there is a great gulf set between them. On the most vital of all questions they are at variance; there is no bond of sympathy in their religious thought; no Sunday life in Common. And if there be children, what hope is there for peace? We have seen the Catholic mother obliged to take advantage of her husband's absence, in order to bring her children to be baptized. If the Catholic parent be not firm in his, or her convictions, what hope for the souls of their children, or for the parent's own? Do not then, dear children, allow yourselves to be deceived by foolishly imagining that your case would be different were you to marry outside of your own Church. The one whom you would choose would not be either a hero, or an angel, which possibly your passion might suggest, but a very common mortal with all the frailties of humanity. Matrimony has enough of cares and trials, under the most favourable circumstances, without the additional cause of division and unhappiness engendered by a difference of religious belief. Seek your life partners in your own Church, and seek them amongst those who live up to her teachings; then your love will be according to God, and not according to the flesh.

Matrimony is a sacrament, and confers grace on those who worthily receive it. In order to profit by this sacrament one

must contract marriage with heart and soul, purified by a sincere confession and enlivened by faith. Holy church, the watchful and uncompromising guardian of the sanctity of marriage, laid down from Apostolic times, rules for its due celebration. Towards the end of the first century St. Ignatius reminds those about to be married that it behooves them to be joined by the sentence of the bishop, so that their marriage may be according to the Lord, and not according to cupidity.—(Ep. ad. Polyc. C. V.). And Turtullian speaks of marriage as that “which the church unites, and the oblation (that is the Mass) confirms, and the blessing seals.”—(Lib. II ad. Ux. C. 8) In the church, and during mass, then the nuptial benediction is to be given; and hence we find in the earliest Rituals and Missals a prayer for that occasion. There is also a Nuptial Mass, during the celebration of which the blessing is to be given. If the future home of a young couple is to be Christian, their union must be first sanctified by the prayers and rites of the Church, performed in the manner prescribed by the church herself. Hence in future all marriages, unless some sufficient cause for exception exists, must be solemnized in the Church, and with the Nuptial Mass. Where two or more are to be celebrated on the same day they shall all attend at the same Mass, unless some other arrangement shall have been previously made. This rule of the church, made in the best interests of those who are about to enter the responsible state of Matrimony, will, we feel sure, be gladly enforced by Pastors, and cheerfully complied with by those whom it concerns.

In this holy penitential season of Lent let all, old and young, married and single, look to their manner of acting at home, and see if it be really such as becometh good Christians. Does each one strive to make the home cheerful, to banish dissensions, to have God honored therein? Do parents endeavour to provide suitable books and papers for their children; and do the children prize the pleasures of home more than the dangerous ones that are to be found abroad? We must understand this one thing, that unless the home have a Catholic spirit, a Catholic atmosphere, its members can scarcely ever become good children of the church. Religion must pervade the house if the actions of its inmates are to be moulded and guided by the teaching of God's word. Let pious pictures, the Crucifix,

and good books hold the place of honour in your rooms, so that those who enter, as well as yourselves, may be reminded of your duty of honouring God and his holy ones.

Our Holy Father the Pope has expressed his desire to revive everywhere that beautiful devotion, so suited for family prayer, of the Rosary. We too, dearly Beloved, exhort you to recite, every evening, in common, the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin. Unless you have family devotions every day your house cannot have a true Catholic atmosphere. Let all young couples begin their married life by reciting daily the Rosary, and the cares and toils of life will seem light and sweet. Let those families in which this devotion is not practised begin it now, and continue it until death. It will sanctify the home-circle, and bring down innumerable blessings on its members. Faith and prayer to guide and strengthen action are what the world most requires. Make each of your homes a centre from which these may go forth.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

This Pastoral shall be read in all the Churches of the Diocese, as soon as possible after its reception by the Pastor.

† C. O'BRIEN,

Abp. of Halifax.

E. F. MURPHY,

Secretary.

St. Mary's, Halifax, Feb. 12th, 1885.